

Washington, DC –Today, Congressman Harry Teague's Energy Jobs for Veterans Act will be heard by the full House Veteran's Affairs Committee. The bill, aimed at improving employment opportunities for veterans, seeks to establish programs to provide on-the-job training, apprenticeship, real experience, and long-term employment in all energy fields to veterans. If the committee favorably reports the legislation, the bill would be eligible for consideration by the full House of Representatives.

"So many of our veterans are finding it increasingly difficult to secure jobs after returning home," said Congressman Teague a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "This bill not only helps our veterans find stable employment following their service, but also helps grow New Mexico's energy industry and keeps energy production here at home."

Funded by competitive grants, the program would reimburse energy employers for apprenticeship and on-the-job training provided to veterans. The program would be available to employers across multiple energy fields, including oil and gas, energy efficient building, construction and retrofits, renewable electric power, biofuel production, energy efficiency assessment, and nuclear power. Unlike other employment training programs for veterans, the Energy Jobs for Veterans Act ensures that a veteran has the security of employment while he or she receives training and apprenticeship. Eligible employers are offered a strong incentive to hire a veteran because companies will be reimbursed for training.

"This bill offers a great opportunity to a new generation of veterans that have a specific set of needs," said Sonya Crose of Las Cruces. Sonya is a veteran of the Air Force and member of Congressman Teague's Veteran Advisory Committee. "Congressman Teague's legislation will fulfill those needs by securing our country's energy needs for the future and giving veterans the skills they need to secure our energy for the next generation."

The legislation was introduced following a roundtable discussion with New Mexico Veterans that Congressman Harry Teague held in Valencia County focused on expanding job opportunities for Veterans.

“I spent the last two years of my Air Force career counseling young active duty troops. In those days, jobs weren't that scarce and yet many of them still struggled to find meaningful employment,” said Veteran Advisory Committee member Terry Benson of Alamogordo. “There are too few jobs open to our returning troops and I feel this would be an excellent opportunity for them to develop careers in the energy industry.”

The latest survey of veterans unemployment by the Department of Labor shows the number of unemployed Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is now almost the same as the number of service members currently deployed in support of those two wars. When the national unemployment rate hit 9.7% last fall, veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were unemployed at a rate of 11.3%.

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